

Setting an Example for Health Extension Workers Everywhere – the case of Bizuwork Zewdu

Grant under Grant extends Growth through Nutrition’s multisectoral approach with a focus on developing ownership and skills in woreda and kebele institutions



HEWs like Bizuwork have gone a long way in transforming the attention mothers give to their children’s nutrition and health
Magdalahit Ghirma – September, 2020
Debark Woreda, North Gondar

“Our performance has really improved since Grant Under Grant’s involvement”

Bizuwork Zewdu – Health Extension Worker
Debark Woreda, North Gondar Region

After 10 years of dedicating her life to her work as a health extension worker, Bizuwork Zewdu has come to understand her role and that of health facilities very well. Despite the commitment she and her peers show towards their work, outreach toward the community was not always as effective as they would have liked it to be. What’s more, nutrition is often overlooked as a priority, as Bizuwork observed “the focus on nutrition was simply minimal before.”

Bizuwork is just one of the many beneficiaries who are impacted by the Grant under Grant (GuG) program, a pilot initiative by Growth through Nutrition that funds and coaches Government of Ethiopia woreda and kebele offices in order to empower them to take on local nutrition challenges. GuG recently completed its implementation in one Tigray woreda (Naedir Adet) and two woredas Amhara region (Ebinat and Debark), where Bizuwork currently works.

An astute member of the Deber Health Post and the woreda’s health team, Bizuwork takes on multiple roles in securing better nutrition and health for her community. Primarily, she ensures that the health post provides basic health services to its clients, such as antenatal care for mothers, vaccination, de-worming and vitamin A and Iron Folic Acid supplementation.

“Our performance has really improved since the involvement of Grant Under Grant, from registering and counseling pregnant mothers, to taking key measurements of children under two and referring them to the Out-Patient Therapeutic Program if they are identified as malnourished” says Bizuwork.



Deber Health Post documents and organizes their cases for easy and quality follow-up
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The influence of Grant under Grant support is evident at the Health Post, with an organized and systematic approach to managing and follow up with patients. What’s more – the initiative’s empowering approach has encouraged her and her team members in the kebele to take charge of their community’s health and nutrition. “If the project were no longer here,” she exclaims, “our committee is committed and agreed that we would persist in making sure mothers continue to receive quality health services beyond the GuG support.” As Bizuwork explained, “we have learned to clearly identify what was missing in the community and what kind of services mothers and infants need.”



Key-hole Garden used to demonstrate to mothers
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Beyond providing health services, the Deber team is actively improving livelihood and nutrition behaviors of the community members. As Bizuwork elaborated, “we reach out to mothers during counseling but also teenagers” – referring to the adolescents in the area – “teaching them about menstruation, what diets would benefit them and exploring child marriage.”

When it comes to community mobilization, Bizuwork explains that demonstrations and discussions go a long way. “However” she adds, “what works best is when a mother who has already adopted improved nutrition behaviors, such as feeding her children eggs, shares her own story with the community.” Based on this experience the health post has adapted their nutrition communications accordingly. “We make sure to include testimonials now that we know how effectively they work.”

“For example” says Bizuwork, “when we see that a mother has managed to multiply 6 chickens into 30, we encourage others to use the same breed.”



Bizuwork at the Deber Health Post
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Bizuwork is proud of the impact that the Deber health post has made on nutrition. For example, she cited the nutritional porridge recipe shared with mothers, “we urge them to make the porridge for their children, and explain that children will not only be healthier, but also develop mentally and achieve more in school.”

She also demonstrated the key-hole garden in the health post compound, constructed as a model for mothers to implement at home – a best practice that the health facility played a major role in diffusing the practice.

“The project’s involvement was wonderful” she concludes, adding “we are confident now that whether or not future projects assist us, we are capable of continuing the work by our own.”